(a) whether Government are aware that there is a popular misconception that agricultural sector as a whole is a heavily subsidised sector;

(b) whether Government are also aware that scholars who have looked at the direct and indirect interventions of Government in the agricultural sector find that the net effect of all these interventions is equivalent to imposition of a modest tax on the agricultural sector rather than handing out large subsidies; and

(c) if so, the steps Government have taken to remove this misconception?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI ARVIND NETAM): (a) to (c) Due to subsidies on fertilisers, irrigation water and power for agriculture, there is a usual feeling that agriculture sector is highly subsidised. However, certain studies which have examined the entire interventions by the Government in terms of direct and indirect support have concluded that agriculture sector as a whole has been negatively subsidised. The Government is of the view that compared to many of the developed countries, agriculture sector in India is not heavily subsidised.

Increasing the productivity of Coconut Plantations

4887. SHRI YERRA NARAYANASWAMY: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have studied the possibility of increasing productivity of coconut plantations in the coastal areas of Andhra Pradesh;

(b) whether it is a fact that no new varieties of coconut have been introduced in the Godavari delta of Andhra Pradesh; and

(c) the steps proposed by IARI and other research bodies to study ways of increasing productivity of coconut plantations in coastal areas and Godavari delta in Andhra Pradesh?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI ARVIND NETAM): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Research efforts to improve productivity of coconut in coastal areas and Godavari delta in Andhra Pradesh through improved varieties, nutrient management, inter & mixed cropping, management of major diseases like Ganoderma, Tatipaka etc., are being carried out at Ambajipeta Centre under ICAR's All India Coordinated Research Project on Palms, to develop suitable package of practices for adoption by farmers.

Impetus to marketing of Coconuts

4888. SHRI YERRA NARAYANASWAMY: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal to give impetus to marketing of coconuts in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Coconut Board has taken any steps to popularise coconut products in the country; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI ARVIND NETAM): (a) and (b) For marketing of coconut and its products, following steps are taken:

(i) Central and State agencies are collaborating in the Minimum Support Prices programme for copra, on year to year basis.

(ii) Government of Kerala have decided to distribute coconut oil through PDS to increase the demand for coconut oil;

(iii) During 8th Plan, Coconut Development Board propose to set up 3 Market Intelligence-cum-Sales Centres in metropolis to promote marketing activities of traditional and non-traditional coconut products and to disseminate market intelligence.